
LAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES FOR EACH MANAGEMENT UNIT

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photograph by Pete Martin

CHAPTER 3

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter land management policy is presented for specific sites within the planning area. The chapter is organized into 12 subregions. A map of these areas is shown on the following page (and in Chapter 1). Subregions are presented on the pages and in the order shown on the divider sheet at the beginning of this chapter. Subregions are further divided into management units. A management unit is an area that is generally homogenous with respect to resources, topography and land ownership.

Each subregion section is divided into two parts. The first is an overview of resources and their management for the subregion as a whole. The second presents specific land management policy for each management unit in the subregion. A map showing land ownership in the subregion and boundaries of management units and subunits is presented at the end of the second part.

The land management policies presented for each management unit are described below:

A. Statement of Management Intent — The statement of management intent defines near and long-term management objectives for the management unit and the methods to achieve these objectives.

B. Land Use Summary Chart — These charts include primary and secondary surface land use designations, prohibited uses, subsurface resource management policy and land ownership. The land use designations provide a quick picture of planned uses within a unit, but they must be used in conjunction with the statement of management intent for the complete explanation of management policy.

C. Management Guidelines — This section includes management guidelines that apply only to a specific management unit and a reference to applicable area-wide management guidelines in Chapter 2.

D. Maps of Land Ownership and Management Unit and Subunit Boundaries — units are divisions of land within management units.

Surface and Subsurface Land Use Designations

The plan presents separate land use designations for surface and subsurface resources. The plan designates the primary and secondary surface land uses that are

permitted. A **primary surface use** is one that is of major importance in a management unit or subunit. The unit will be managed to encourage this use, and its conservation and/or development. A **secondary surface use** is permitted within a management unit or subunit when its occurrence will not adversely affect achieving the objectives for the primary uses. A secondary use may be the main use for a limited area of the management unit. For example, within a management unit where the primary uses are forestry and public recreation, a small area may be identified for land disposal and private recreational development. The plan also identifies **prohibited surface uses** within each unit. These are uses that will not be permitted anywhere in the unit without a plan amendment. In an area identified as critical habitat, for example, construction of year-round roads may be prohibited. Uses that are not specifically prohibited may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (for state land) and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (for borough land) determine the proposed uses are consistent with the statement of management intent for the unit in question and applicable management guidelines.

Subsurface resource designations such as "minerals," "coal," "oil and gas" generally are not applied as primary or secondary surface land use designations. This is because the problems in locating and measuring subsurface resources make it difficult and potentially misleading to apply primary and secondary designations in the same way these can be applied to surface resources like timber. In order to make clear the department's policy regarding subsurface resource development, the plan provides a statement for each management unit as to whether the area is open or closed to location and available or unavailable for leasing. In management units that are open/available, mineral development will be encouraged and accommodated consistent with state law, the areawide land management policies of Chapter 2 and the statements of management intent and management guidelines in the affected unit. Where a management unit is open to mineral location and it has a primary surface designation such as wildlife habitat, this surface designation will not be construed to prevent mineral development.

A surface designation for primary use minerals, coal and oil and gas is made in certain cases where there is intensive subsurface resource exploration and/or development of statewide significance or likely to be

such activity in the next several years. In these areas, as in areas that are open/available, subsurface development will be encouraged and accommodated. Primary surface values will be protected, however, in so far as possible through the application of existing state laws and procedures, the policies in the plan, and the provisions of such instruments as SEEA lease stipulations and approved plans of operation.

Management Guidelines

Most public lands will be managed for multiple use. For this reason, the plan establishes management guidelines that will allow various uses to occur without serious conflicts. Management guidelines can direct the timing, amount, or specific location of different activities in order to make the permitted uses compatible. For example, timber harvests along anadromous streams will be designed to protect habitat values in the stream corridors.

Areas Proposed for Legislative or Administrative Designations

A number of areas in this plan are recommended for legislative or administrative designations as state recreation rivers, state forests, state parks, wildlife refuges or public reserves. The areas recommended for these special designations are lands and waters with outstanding public values that should remain in public ownership permanently. Legislative designations (e.g., state forests) must be established by the Alaska Legislature. Administrative designations (e.g., public reserves) can be established by the governor. For more information on specific proposals for special designations see the "Priorities for Legislative and Administrative Designation" section of Chapter 4.

Flexibility of the Plan

The large majority of land addressed by this plan will be managed for multiple use. The land use designations shown on the maps and charts in this chapter are not intended to be inflexible. Uses not shown may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (on state land) and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (on borough land) determine they are consistent with the statement of management intent for the management unit in question and consistent with applicable management guidelines. Boundaries of land use designations shown on the following maps may be modified through on-the-ground implementation activities (site planning, disposal, etc.) as long as modifications adhere to the intent of the plan. For example, field surveys may be necessary to delineate precisely the wetland boundaries shown on management unit maps. In addition, through implementation of the plan, uses not originally

designated may be permitted if they are not inconsistent with the management intent for a particular management unit. This plan should not be construed to preclude site decisions which are in compliance with the management intent and guidelines herein.

A related point is that this plan will not provide direct answers to many of the site specific issues frequently encountered by state and borough land managers. A plan that deals with a region the size of the Susitna Area cannot provide a predetermined answer to, for example, a question related to a proposed communication site on a ridge of the Chugach Mountains. The plan can, however, make clear the general management objectives for the area in question and thereby provide the basis for a more informed decision.

Definitions

Definitions of terms used frequently in this chapter are given in a glossary presented on Appendix B of this plan.